

How Dust Settles by NamjooniesBabie

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Genre: F/M, Family, Happy, Wholesome

Language: English

Characters: Dustin Henderson, Eleven (Stranger Things), Jim "Chief" Hopper, Joyce Byers, Lucas Sinclair, Max Hargrove, Mike Wheeler, Steve Harrington, Will Byers

Relationships: Eleven/Mike Wheeler, Joyce Byers/Jim "Chief" Hopper, Max Hargrove & Lucas Sinclair

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Summary:

The gate is closed, a year has passed and the dust of disaster has settled. Now Jim Hopper has to try figure out how to be a real parent alone, his now daughter Jane 'El' Hopper is at school like a normal child, and as Joyce Byers starts to recover from the death of her love, new feelings for her old friend emerges.

[Just wholesome shit of everyone trying to be normal and happy because they deserve it.]

1. Chapter 1

Hopper's PoV

The small flickering candle casts an orange glow over her nose.

"I blow it out?" She confirms, looking up at me.

"Yeah, and make a wish, it's tradition, I mean normally the candle is in a cake but seeing it's your birthday Eggos seemed appropriate."

"And an assload of frosting," El grins, blowing out the candle and throwing it across the room.

"Hey, watch your language, and not too much frosting you have school!" I can't help but laugh, grabbing the can of chocolate frosting off the table and piling it onto my own stack of waffles.

"Do I really have to go to school? You said we could go into the city."

"We can, and we will, but not today, you have to learn." She frowns at her food.

"I hate school, and everyone calls me Jane, that was *mama's* name for me."

"Everyone hates school, at least you have friends there, just wait till high school, that's when it gets hard," I chuckle.

"Did you have friends?" She asks curiously. I think back to high school, semi-fond memories of skipping classes with random girls, drinking in the woods with guys barely making it to the end of the year, sharing a cigarette under the stairwell with Joyce...

"I had... People I knew, not exactly friends but," she watches me patiently, smirking slightly.

"But?" She prompts.

"I wasn't a great kid in school, I acted out, did things I shouldn't. But you're a good kid, I'm not letting you throw away your education," I insist. She sighs, scooping her finger into the frosting on my plate and licking it off.

"You're supposed to be on a diet," she smiles, sticking her tongue out and putting her plate in the sink.

"I'm allowed a treat!" I protest, pulling on my shoes and grabbing my car keys. "Joyce is going to pick you up with Will, you're allowed an hour at the arcade with your friends, and when I say an hour I *mean* an hour okay?"

"Okay, thank you," she smiles, hugging me quickly before getting into the car. I drop a small bag of quarters into her lap, more than I usually would give her. Some are for Will but she knows that. He

doesn't. I've seen her slipping them into his pocket when he's busy, always careful that he won't feel it. I'm proud of her, of what she's becoming, who she is. I hope she knows I am.

2. Chapter 2

Hoppers PoV

The cabin door is wide open and I'm singing to one of my old vinyls when I feel a tap on my shoulder. My singing turns to screaming as I spin around, broom screwdriver held like a weapon. Joyce Byers is stood in front of me, covering her mouth to try hide her laugh.

"Sorry Hop, I would've knocked but the door was open, I brought you those balloons you asked for," she smiles, holding out the box. I take it, slowing my breathing.

"Thank you, I appreciate it, I want to make this birthday special," I say, looking around the half decorated room. I cleared out the old cabin I used to live in with El, restored the parts that were breaking or broken. I collected bits of furniture, sofas and chairs and a VCR player. Now El and her friends can use it as a den and have film nights together.

"It will be, you're good to her, she's going to love this, they all will. And I'm really sorry about scaring you," she giggles. She helps me flip over the wooden table I was screwing together and push it into the middle of the room. "It looks amazing in here," she smiles, an arm winding around my waist. "How about a coffee before we blow up all these balloons?" She suggests. I find it hard to say no to her. Her hair is pulling out of the loose elastic she used to tie it back. If Joyce Byers can't be tamed neither can her hair.

"I would but I have so much to do, I have to put up banners and pick up the food an-"

"I'll pick up the food after work, it'll take ten minutes, stop stressing," she says. "You're a good dad, she will love this, I promise. Come on, Hop, you deserve a break." She looks up at me hopefully and I have to give in to her pleading eyes. I can't bare to see her unhappy.

"Okay, okay, one coffee Joyce Byers," I smile, my arm around her shoulder guiding her out of the cabin.

Notes for the Chapter:

Sorry this was such a short chapter, hopefully they won't all be like this haha.

3. Chapter 3

El's PoV

Hopper helps me out Joyce's car, checking I can't see through the blindfold he insisted I wear. He puts his hands on my shoulders, guiding me up some stairs, out of the cold through a slightly creaky door.

"Okay, are you ready?" I nod once and he unties the blindfold, letting it slip to the floor. I look around at all my friends, stood smiling in the cabin that used to be my home, but it's different now. It's brighter, it has different furniture and games on the shelves instead of his boxes. I look up at Hopper, confused.

"Seeing as we don't live here now, I thought you and your friends could use this as a place to hangout now," he smiles.

"It'll be great, we can have our movie nights here now!" Mike adds, indicating to the TV.

"Yeah! We could put in a mini fridge for drinks and store popcorn and pudding cups and choco-" Dustin is interrupted by Hopper coughing loudly, raising an eyebrow.

"Do you like it?" He asks me, smiling nervously.

"I love it," I smile, hugging him tightly.

"Oh, El we got you some presents," Will says, holding up a box that's been put on the table.

"We all had to put our money together to get it though," Max admits.

"Thank you," I smile, walking towards to three nearly wrapped boxes. I start with the one from my friends, easily tearing off the thin paper. Inside is a box containing a dress, the same blue one I saw in the town next to Hawkins.

"So pretty," I whisper, feeling the silk between my fingers. "Thank you so much." I hug each of my friends before turning to the next box, a much smaller one.

"That's from me," Mike says, blushing a little.

"He saved up for ages," Dustin whispers to Lucas. I carefully lift the lid off the box, gasping slightly at the shiny silver necklace inside.

"I-I-" Now it's my turn to blush, with everyone watching me, Mike nervously biting his lip. "You shouldn't have, it looks expensive," I mumble, running a finger over the small gems on the heart shaped locket.

"I wanted to buy it for you, I saw it and thought of you," he admits.

Now he's bright red. I suddenly remember Hopper behind me, watching the whole thing. I quickly change the attention with a thank you and a hug before moving onto the last gift. This one has a ribbon tied into a bow with a label saying *from Joyce*.

"I hope you like it, Hop said you wanted to get a dog so I got you some dog training books, maybe if you learn how to look after them he'll let you get one," she winks, giggling when Hopper scowls at her. I flick through the pages, showing different breeds of dogs and the care they need.

"Can I get one now?" I ask Hopper with a wide smile.

"We'll see," he sighs, ruffling my hair. "Why don't you put on your new dress, then we can start the party."

"Please don't dance," I whine, picking up the dress and necklace and carrying them into the bathroom.

4. Chapter 4

Hoppers PoV

Most of the kids have gone now, picked up by their parents with their arms full of leftover food. Now it's just El and Will, both asleep curled up on the couch. I put an old record on the record player, one of my dad's when I was younger, his wedding song. After mom passed away we listened to it every night, until he got remarried. I found it in the trash one night and quickly retrieved it, hiding it under my pillow for years. Now I hold a hand out to Joyce, a silent question. She takes it, giggling a little when I pull her into me, a silent reply.

"Do you remember in seventh grade at the snow ball, you wanted to dance with Lonnie Byers so much but he wanted to dance with Karen Everette."

"Yeah I remember, you found me crying in the cafeteria so you said you'd dance with me, even though you couldn't," she smiles. "Then you tripped on one of the table legs and broke your nose."

"You always include that part don't you," I complain, making her laugh.

"Well it's my favourite part!" I spin her round, her lifting off of her neck and brushing against her flushed cheeks.

"I thought I was the luckiest kid in school, getting to dance with you." She starts to reply but the phone rings, breaking the magic of the moment. Joyce rushes over to it, pressing the receiver to her ear.

"Jonath- I know, I'm sorry, I lost track of time. I'm still with Hopper, we're *fine* Jonathan, we're coming home now." She hangs it up, smiling guiltily at me before going over to Will. "Are you awake sweetie? We have to go, it's late," she whispers, coaxing him up. He whines, saying something incoherent and slumping against his mother's shoulder as she guides him out to her little green car. I lift El up carefully, walking out into the cold night air to my car. She curls up in the passenger seat, my coat over her for warmth.

"Thank you for coming tonight, and helping me set up," I say, walking back over to Joyce trying to secure Will under a seatbelt.

"It's no problem, Hop." She gives me a quick hug before slipping into her car. I can't believe I'm still the lucky kid, getting to dance with Joyce Byers, even though I have no one to tell it to.